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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE**  
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**RETHINKING THE CFACC's INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND  
RECONNAISSANCE APPROACH TO COUNTERINSURGENCY**

**By**

**Michael L. Downs**

**Major / United States Air Force**

**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

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## **Abstract**

The counterinsurgencies (COIN) in Iraq and Afghanistan require high levels of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support. The operational component charged with providing much of the ISR to support these COIN operations is the Combined Forces Air Component Commander (CFACC). Unfortunately, the air component finds itself ill-equipped to handle the ISR challenges of COIN because it still adheres to a Major Theater War (MTW) doctrine that emphasizes the detection and destruction of conventional targets, a lengthy planning process, and support to operational-level commanders. However, OIF and OEF COIN operations are centered around lower echelon commanders who face a multitude of different insurgent groups fighting with asymmetric means. U.S. ground commanders therefore need flexible, time-sensitive ISR support from the CFACC to assist them in combating an unconventional enemy. This paper reviews the historical development of the CFACC construct and discusses its MTW roots. It explains the ISR requirements of U.S. commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan and the CFACC's deficiencies in meeting these needs. Finally, the paper proposes an alternative approach to managing ISR and recommends solidifying these changes in doctrine.

In the counterinsurgencies (COIN) in Iraq and Afghanistan, brigade, battalion, company, and special forces commanders all conduct daily missions in their respective areas of operation (AO) to secure neighborhoods and seek out insurgents. As Lieutenant General Metz, former commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) notes, “from small unit to theater level, intelligence provide(s) the basis for every mission.”<sup>1</sup> These missions range from cordon and search to direct action, but all require high levels of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support to assist in target development, mission planning, and execution. Increasing the amount of ISR available to conduct an operation improves the probability of mission success. Mission planning by these units is heavily reliant on intelligence to help answer such questions as where the enemy is located, what he plans to do, where he plans to act, and where improvised explosive devices (IED) might be located. Moreover, intelligence provided to units during execution helps them identify infiltration routes and possible ambush locations, gives commanders one more look at a target before moving against it, and enables decision makers to monitor enemy responses to friendly actions.<sup>2</sup>

While human intelligence (HUMINT) is a key source for much of this data, imagery and signals information collected from ISR assets, such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) or U-2 reconnaissance aircraft, often complements information gleaned from HUMINT operations, providing commanders with a multidimensional intelligence perspective of the enemy and the objective area. Laura Geldhof writes that “in COIN, intelligence operations strive to fuse intelligence from non-organic collection sources (i.e., multiple sources) into a seamless picture of the insurgency networks and to provide *corroborating* [emphasis added] intelligence for targeting.”<sup>3</sup> The operational component charged with providing much of the

ISR to support the COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is the Combined Forces Air Component Commander (CFACC).<sup>4</sup> While the CFACC provides thousands of hours of ISR support each month to JTF and other component commanders in the USCENTCOM AOR, the net effect of these missions, while helpful, is significantly less than it could be. That is because, in the words of Colonel Teresa Fitzpatrick, 548<sup>th</sup> Intelligence Group commander, “we (CFACC) have only one airborne ISR TTP (Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures): MTW (Major Theater War).”<sup>5</sup> **Were the air component to position itself more appropriately for COIN operations, the ISR it provides ground commanders would be more useful in helping maneuver units accomplish their missions.** To understand the cause and extent of the CFACC’s deficiencies in providing effective ISR for COIN operations, it is helpful to appreciate the historical context of the CFACC construct itself, the nature of the COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and how ISR required for these operations differs from conventional operations. By laying this foundation, it is then possible to discuss how the CFACC is currently conducting ISR operations in support of the COIN efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq and how these ISR operations could be retooled to increase their effectiveness. While COIN operations are incredibly complex and involve extensive diplomatic, governance, information, security, economic, and psychological efforts, this paper will largely focus on ISR support to security operations in the COIN environment.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

In the post-Vietnam era, the Air Force dedicated a large amount of effort to develop its ability to fight at the operational level of war through the CFACC and attendant Air Operations Center (AOC) constructs.<sup>6</sup> Beginning in the early 1990s, CFACC principles were developed based upon the threats of conventional wars in the Middle East and Asia. As

“information” increasingly became a significant warfare medium and weapons became more technology dependent and reliant on precise information to guide them, a premium was placed on fielding a robust fleet of ISR assets that could locate the equipment our conventional adversaries might possess.<sup>7</sup> From fixed enemy command and control facilities to mobile Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAMs), tanks, and fighter aircraft, the CFACC construct evolved to where the AOC could command and control a constellation of ISR assets capable of detecting enemy threats, while directing strike aircraft to destroy them 24/7, in all weather conditions. “The rigid nature of these (conventional) operations allowed our (ISR) systems and intelligence personnel to apply templates to probable (enemy) actions”<sup>8</sup> and place our collection systems over optimal points in the battlefield to detect projected enemy activity.

To command and control (C2) this lethal force, AOC processes were developed over time into a carefully-crafted 96-hour air tasking order (ATO) cycle, complete with meetings, processes, checklists, and products, all codified in joint doctrine and commonly practiced in each theater.<sup>9</sup> AOC processes were not only created based on a conventional war assumption, but were predicated on the notion that friendly operations would be directed from the operational level. This level of focus essentially required the CFACC to have a macro-view of the ground scheme of maneuver. For instance, the Combined Forces Land Component Commander (CFLCC) would develop battle plans that employed large ground forces, such as corps and divisions, moving against similar-sized enemy units. As a visual, the scheme of maneuver for these ground operations could be depicted on a map by sweeping arrows indicating the friendly axes of advance. To plan for and conduct these operations, the CFLCC would request ISR, interdiction, close air support (CAS), and a range of other support missions from the CFACC. To plan an ATO, the AOC had to have an understanding

of what the ground component hoped to accomplish during an ATO period, but did not need detailed information about lower echelon operations.

In addition to the conventional war and operational-level focus, the ATO cycle was based on a hierarchical request process that involved long lead times to get requests incorporated into the ATO. In essence, if a division, brigade, or even battalion wanted ISR or CAS support from the CFACC, it had to forecast that requirement 72-96 hours in advance, typically based on templating friendly and enemy movements, to have its requests approved by higher headquarters. The CFLCC would collate validated air support requests and forward them to the CFACC to be injected into the ATO process. The consolidated CFLCC list would then compete against the JTF and other components' requests for inclusion in the ATO.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, the 96-hour ATO battle rhythm worked well in a conventional framework, because battle fronts, rates of advance, and enemy actions were relatively predictable. The consequent requirements for CFACC ISR and other support could be forecast by the ground unit with an acceptable degree of certainty.

While this operational C2 approach to air warfare, which was developed after Vietnam and perfected in time for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), proved to be successful, it was created to fight conventional wars. Unfortunately, with regard to ISR, the same conventional AOC processes are largely being applied in the COIN efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan today, resulting in an ineffective use of CFACC ISR.

### **COIN OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ**

Understanding how the CFACC can provide more effective ISR support to COIN operations requires an intimate understanding of the types of missions OIF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) forces are conducting and the manner in which these forces

operate. COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have many characteristics, but can be characterized as highly complex, unpredictable, and dynamic, and can generally be differentiated from conventional operations by the nature of the enemy.<sup>11</sup> As opposed to a conventional foe with all the trappings of a modern army, the insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan often wear civilian clothes, do not use traditional military equipment, and conduct a variety of irregular small unit actions. They do not operate from customary bases of operation or in large formations and, like many insurgent forces, blend in with the population for protection. Trying to detect this enemy with ISR assets is therefore much different from looking for conventional weapon systems.

The insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan conduct a variety of missions to disrupt coalition operations. They rarely engage coalition forces in anything resembling pitched battles, and instead use suicide bombings, sniper attacks, ambushes, and IEDs against military and civilian targets to inflict damage and create instability.<sup>12</sup> Insurgents also conduct sabotage against key infrastructure, such as oil pipelines and power lines, and smuggle contraband into Iraq and Afghanistan from countries like Pakistan, Iran, and Syria. The ISR challenges associated with detecting this type of activity are much different from requirements for ISR in conventional wars.

Complicating the challenge of fighting the insurgents in Iraq is the fact that they are not a unitary enemy. Rather, coalition forces face multivariate violence, from dozens of insurgent groups, all employing different combat techniques. As such, a method one enemy group may employ against friendly forces (e.g., the use of IEDs) may vary from how another group employs that same method. Therefore, each brigade and battalion must become intimately familiar with the enemy in its Area of Operation (AO) and develop a strategy to defeat that

enemy. Eliot Cohen writes that the “mosaic nature of an insurgency means that local commanders have the best grasp of their own situations”<sup>13</sup> and as such, must determine how best to deal with them.

As a result, the true supported commander for COIN operations is not at the JTF or CFLCC level, as it is in conventional operations. But in the words of the former Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) collection manager, Colonel Mardis, “the war is being fought at the brigade and battalion levels.”<sup>14</sup> The effect on coalition operations is that they are highly decentralized with each unit conducting its own, often independent wars in its AO.<sup>15</sup> Because the war is being fought at the brigade-level and below, taskings to the CFACC for ISR support are being generated there. A quick perusal of any day’s CFACC ISR collection deck reveals that the vast majority of requirements are not from CJTF-76 in OEF or MNF-I in OIF, though these C2 nodes validate and submit lower echelon requests for ISR to the CFACC.<sup>16</sup> Nor is the collection deck populated with targets from USCENTCOM or the CFACC, as it might be in a conventional war. Rather, the vast majority of ISR requirements are generated from maneuver units.<sup>17</sup> Lt Justin Mahoney, who recently served as a collection manager at the Combined AOC (CAOC) at Al Udeid, Qatar, estimated that approximately 80-85 percent of collection requests in OIF were generated from the battalion and brigade levels and that in OEF, nearly 100 percent of collection requests were initiated from this same level.<sup>18</sup>

Without a fundamental understanding of who is generating ISR tasking and who the true supported commander is, the CFACC cannot fully optimize command and control of ISR to support COIN operations. The bottom line is, in the COIN fight the focus for CFACC ISR

support, unlike in a conventional war, is not the Combatant Command, JTF, CFACC, or even the CFLCC, but it is the company, battalion, and brigade-sized unit.

### **WHAT COIN COMMANDERS NEED ISR TO PROVIDE THEM**

To counter the insurgent threats in OEF and OIF, coalition forces conduct a large variety of missions. They may conduct cordon and search missions in a particular village or area of town to search for weapons caches, insurgents, or insurgent hideouts. ISR may be needed to surveil an objective area prior to a mission to locate enemy ambush points or determine insurgent patterns of activity. ISR may also provide overwatch of a convoy as it heads into a village searching for IEDs, ambushes, or other suspicious activity. Further, ISR assets can give commanders situational awareness necessary to defend against enemy operations or enemy reactions to friendly missions, such as detecting egress actions, reinforcing movements, or sniper positions.<sup>19</sup> ISR assets can also be used to monitor critical infrastructure for sabotage activities or surveil border passes for trans-shipment of weapons, drugs, and other illicit activities.

Overall, ISR platforms are tasked to image a spot on the Earth for one of two primary reasons. The first purpose is to detect enemy activity. When a ground unit requests an ISR platform to image a target, it does not just pick a spot in Afghanistan or Iraq and hope that a UAV will find enemy activity there. This would be comparable to searching for insurgents through a soda straw. Instead, the requester increases the probability of detecting enemy activity by having ISR confirm enemy activity identified by other intelligence sources.<sup>20</sup> For instance, a ground unit might receive a HUMINT tip indicating the presence of enemy activity in a certain location. To confirm the tip, a battalion may request ISR support from the CFACC to locate the enemy activity. AOC collection managers then use the initial

HUMINT tip to cue SIGINT and IMINT sensors on ISR platforms to find the enemy activity. Ground unit requests could include anything from locating an IED, to confirming the presence of High Value Targets, to monitoring border crossing points for insurgent activity.

Once enemy activity is detected, then ISR is used for a second purpose: to facilitate action against the enemy. Intelligence gained from HUMINT or ISR missions may result in the planning and conduct of friendly operations against enemy targets. Lieutenant General Metz writes that “in more cases than not, intelligence drives most of the battalion and brigade-level operations. . . .”<sup>21</sup> To be sure, much of this actionable intelligence in OEF and OIF is initially derived from HUMINT sources. However, these initial tip-offs are then used to guide other ISR assets (SIGINT and IMINT) to further refine the intelligence picture. The ground unit planning for the upcoming operation thus requires additional targeting and planning data to conduct its mission. Intelligence analysts at the ground unit request ISR support from the CFACC and fuse that intelligence with their HUMINT to “gain the best possible understanding of the insurgent network”<sup>22</sup> and prepare for the upcoming operation. Thus, intelligence plays a key role in both initiating friendly operations and then supporting the planning and conduct of them.

It is important to note that the traditional paradigm for collecting intelligence in COIN operations has an inverse relationship with collection approach to conventional operations. Whereas the needs of the operational-level commander drive intelligence collection in conventional wars, General Metz writes that “the intelligence effort in Iraq is a ‘bottom-up’ process. . . .”<sup>23</sup> Vice Admiral Jacoby, former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency expands on this paradigm shift. “There’s [an] issue that’s desperately important. We grew up in a world where the echelon above us always had better information than we did, and it

cascaded down. We need to be thinking about how we can have information flow up. Today, the platoon or company that is on the ground in Afghanistan and patrols the same area regularly for an entire deployment has a far better idea of what's happening in that sector than someone who is further removed.”<sup>24</sup> Admiral Jacoby's point is clear—successful intelligence operations necessitate close interaction between the tactical and operational levels, which in this case means between the CFACC and the maneuver units it is supporting at the brigade and battalion levels.

Colonel James Waring, who served as the CFLCC's chief liaison officer to the CFACC in 2004, highlighted the need for CFACC integration with the maneuver unit, stating that “we have learned that the macro-view of the ground scheme of maneuver that is echelons-above-battalion level provides insufficient situational awareness to the CFACC and his aircrews.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, for the CFACC to provide value-added ISR support for COIN operations, it should not only be linked to the maneuver unit, but it must have access to the knowledge the ground unit has about the enemy in its AO. The AOC can then use this information to guide its ISR collection efforts. For example, Army Major Charles Baker explains that “utilizing UAVs to find explosives or ambushes requires either luck or good intelligence to direct the unmanned aircraft, since the region is too large to maintain constant surveillance.”<sup>26</sup> By working with ground units to cull out relevant knowledge they have about their AO and the enemy's actions there, the CFACC can employ its ISR assets more effectively to increase the probability of detecting priority information the maneuver unit needs to conduct its COIN operations.

The CFACC must therefore understand how to employ ISR appropriately to find enemy activity, be connected to the supported unit to understand the enemy it is seeking to find, be

adept at passing actionable intelligence in a timely manner to key decision makers at the battalion and brigade levels, and highly responsive in providing ISR to support resultant operations.

### **CFACC ISR SUPPORT TO COIN OPERATIONS**

Unfortunately, the current CFACC approach to providing ISR support to COIN does not meet the requirements for this form of war. AOC ISR processes were developed so that CFACC ISR assets could locate enemy equipment and report hostile locations to the AOC so that it could, in turn, direct air assets to destroy enemy threats. Given the nature of the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, the types of collection challenges insurgents present, the variety of missions coalition forces conduct, and the timelines they require to plan for operations, how does the CFACC approach ISR support to COIN?

For the most part, timelines and processes used during the conventional phase of OIF are used in current COIN operations. CFACC timelines for conventional wars necessitate that requesting components submit their ISR requests approximately 48 hours prior to ATO execution. This deadline has not changed for the COIN phase of OIF or OEF.<sup>27</sup> The CAOC at Al Udeid, Qatar, generally requires the JTFs (MNC/F-I and CJTF-76) to have their requirements to collection managers 48 hours prior to ATO execution.<sup>28</sup> Simple math highlights the flaw in this system. The commanders of the 2<sup>d</sup> Brigade Combat Team of the 4<sup>th</sup> ID in Iraq or TF-Devil in Afghanistan, for instance, have to generate their ISR requirements at least 72 hours prior to ATO execution so that the JTF has time to massage and approve them before sending them to the CAOC by H-48. Often, the subordinate battalion must submit its requirements to the brigade-level 96 hours out to give the brigade time to prioritize its own, as well as the subordinate battalions' ISR requests, before sending

them to higher echelons. Predicting what the enemy will do, knowing the exact nature of the friendly mission that will be conducted, and understanding exactly how ISR will be employed that far in advance is a challenge in a COIN where the battlefield is extremely dynamic. Moreover, this burdensome process simply discourages many units from submitting requirements and creates a mindset at the tactical level that CFACC assets, such as the Global Hawk or U-2, are unavailable to support them.<sup>29</sup>

The CFACC also follows its conventional procedures for determining what targets it will image. For instance, a collection manager in the AOC will gather all of the ISR target requests from OIF, rank them according to theater priorities, and then draw a “cut line,” above which, the targets will be imaged. This “cut line” is based upon a number of factors, but is determined by the number of targets a given ATO’s ISR assets can image. For example, units in Iraq may put in requests for 900 targets to be imaged, but the CFACC may only have the capacity to image 500 targets. In this case, the 500 highest-ranking targets will be imaged. This collection management method is known as “peanut butter spreading,” whereby ISR is divided among a large number of requestors giving each requester a portion of the collection it asked for. The advantage of this method is that a significant number of customers are supported and a sizeable amount of targets are imaged. While this process works fine in a conventional fight, it is woefully inadequate for COIN, where it is often preferable to devote an ISR asset to focus on a specific problem for a longer period of time in order to detect activity more clearly. Vice Admiral Jacoby writes that “We need to be in an environment where we can achieve persistent surveillance, which means being able to linger on the problem as long as it takes to understand it.”<sup>30</sup>

The CFACC's current approach to persistence is to think of the problem in terms of space, rather than time. By sprinkling ISR around all of Iraq or Afghanistan rather than focusing it on a limited number of areas, the illusion of persistence is created. For example, daily ISR update briefings to commanders depict various colored circles, representing an assortment of collection assets, covering the majority of the country.<sup>31</sup> However, in a counterinsurgency, ISR must often be persistent over a single problem set for an extended period of time to develop the intelligence picture and tease out actionable intelligence. Clearly, the trade-off with this type of approach is that the CFACC will only be able to image a smaller number of targets. The litmus test for success is not the number of targets imaged, but the actual intelligence that is derived from these missions and the resultant impact on friendly operations.

While the AOC has failed to change its tasking timelines and collection deck procedures to meet the demands of COIN, it has also failed to adequately facilitate the integration of ISR into coalition schemes of maneuver. As was discussed earlier, many ground operations are time-sensitive and driven by intelligence. If, for instance, HUMINT indicates that Taliban fighters will be crossing the border from Pakistan into Afghanistan in the next 24 hours, the ground commander is going to require ISR support to search for and locate this possible activity. Because the tasking process is so hierarchical, the responsible brigade may not be able to get its requests for ISR assistance approved in time to support planning for its operations.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, no formal mechanism exists to link the actual ISR units to the supported ground units. As was discussed earlier by Colonel Waring, this is necessary so that the ground unit can clearly tell the CFACC unit, and in this case the collection unit, how the

enemy functions in its AO, how ISR can be used to detect insurgent activity, and how ISR can be integrated into friendly operations. For example, a battalion planning for an upcoming cordon and search mission might request ISR to search for IEDs and ambush locations. By linking the two parties (ISR unit to ground units directly), the collection unit can learn from the supported battalion where insurgents typically place IEDs (e.g., near street corners) in their AO which, in turn, focuses the search patterns of the ISR unit on the areas where it is most likely to find IEDs. Again, in the multivariate violence in Iraq and Afghanistan, each battalion knows best how the enemy in its AO operates. Because a typical collection unit will be tasked to fly over and support multiple units during a single mission, it must be able to schedule its collection such that data gathering is accomplished in time to support friendly operations. Once again, the collection unit must be in touch with the supported unit to facilitate this level of integration.

Ensuring that such integration occurs is the responsibility of the CFACC. As the provider of ISR, the AOC has the responsibility of meeting the needs of the requester. To do so, the AOC tasks ISR units to accomplish collection in support of maneuver units. Unfortunately, the tasking mechanism is based on a conventional model. That model largely assumes that ISR would support operational-level commanders and, as such, no mechanism exists to provide the level of tactical granularity to ISR units necessary for them to execute effective collection in support of COIN operations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Because the current conventional collection management processes employed by the AOC undermine its ability to optimize ISR support to the COIN efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, the CFACC must reevaluate its approach to this non-traditional form of warfare. Specifically,

the CFACC should shorten ISR request timelines, change its tasking process, synchronize ISR collection with the ground scheme of maneuver, and codify the changes so that ISR can be employed by the AOC across the range of military operations.

Changing the ISR request and tasking process will result in the greatest improvement in the CFACC's ISR support to COIN. To truncate the timelines associated with requesting ISR support, the CFACC can adopt the same process it uses for CAS requests, whereby ground units submit Air Support Requests (ASR) to the AOC to receive this type of support. ASRs are typically submitted 36 hours prior to ATO execution and are mission based rather than target based.<sup>33</sup> Through ASRs, the ground unit requests CAS support for a block of time for a general area to support a specific mission. The AOC prioritizes the ASRs and determines which requests it can satisfy. However, the ground unit decides how to use that CAS asset once that vehicle checks in with its ground customer. Applying this methodology to collection would not only shorten the timelines for requesting collection, but would allow ISR assets to be tasked to image the most current and important targets of the ground commander and put the asset in a direct support role. For example, a Global Hawk could be assigned to support a brigade for a two hour period of time for a given operation. Prior to departure, the Global Hawk team could contact the supported ground unit and receive an update on the operation they are going to support, as well as additional information about the enemy. Before entering the brigade's AO, the Global Hawk pilot could check in with the brigade for a tasking update. The supported unit could then elect to have ISR targets collected as planned, drop targets that are irrelevant, or add targets required by changes in enemy movements or friendly operations. Employing the CAS ASR method for ISR does not preclude the use of collection decks. Units and operational headquarters could still

submit targets to the AOC for standard collection. The AOC would simply have to determine the amount of time a platform would spend collecting deck targets vice providing direct support to ground units. However, by adding the ASR method and allowing units to submit requests 36 hours in advance for direct support, ground units could update the targets they want collected continuously. The AOC could thereby ensure that the targets collected were relevant to the situation on the battlefield as opposed to being determined 72-96 hours earlier.

Though some might argue that the CFACC would lose control of its theater assets through the use of the ASR method, the alternative is to “peanut butter spread” them over large areas, imaging targets that are potentially irrelevant, in an attempt to service as many collection deck targets as possible. While imaging large numbers of targets is often necessary for conventional wars, it dilutes the effectiveness of ISR in COIN. Of note, the AOC would still maintain direction of the asset in the tasking process by making a determination of which units to assign it to and for what duration. Furthermore, the AOC would maintain divert authority for the collection asset, retaining the ability to shift the platform to higher priority operations during execution when required. In the final analysis, this ASR method would greatly increase the flexibility and relevance of CFACC ISR providing current, direct support to COIN operations.

The CFACC can also improve its ISR support to COIN and optimize its collection by facilitating the integration of its ISR units with the ground scheme of maneuver prior to and during mission execution. The CFACC currently uses the Reconnaissance, Surveillance, Targeting, and Acquisition (RSTA) annex, produced for every ATO, to pass the collection game plan to ISR units. Unfortunately, this product has evolved into a generic, high level

document that communicates very little information of tactical relevance. The RSTA annex should be amended to provide ISR units with contextual guidance for their mission. The document should link collection units with the ground units they will be supporting to provide contact information and as much enemy and friendly information as possible. Doing so will integrate CFACC collection with ground operations and move CFACC collection from a target-centric to a mission-focused model.

Finally, changes to AOC ISR procedures to reflect COIN requirements should be codified in joint doctrine and Air Force tactics, techniques, and procedures documents to enable operational commanders to request and use ISR according to the type of war being fought. Current joint and USAF AOC documentation are focused solely on an MTW approach to war.<sup>34</sup> By providing conventional and COIN methodologies for operational ISR, the CFACC will be able to support operations across the warfare spectrum.

## **CONCLUSION**

Success in the counterinsurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan is critical to securing our nation's defense. Key to achieving victory is the synchronization and optimization of all of the resources the United States commits to OIF and OEF. The CFACC must also optimize the effectiveness of the ISR it provides U.S. forces as these troops seek to achieve their goals in the security arena of these COIN operations.

Unfortunately, the air component finds itself ill-equipped to handle the ISR challenges of COIN because it still adheres to its MTW heritage, which emphasizes the detection and destruction of conventional targets, a lengthy planning process, and support to operational-level commanders. However, the counterinsurgencies in OIF and OEF differ greatly from MTW and are centered around lower echelon commanders who face a multitude of different

insurgent groups fighting with asymmetric means. U.S. ground commanders therefore need flexible, time-sensitive ISR support from the CFACC to assist them in combating an unconventional enemy. While the CFACC collection management system does not currently meet the COIN needs of ground commanders, it can greatly increase its utility by truncating request timelines, adjusting its ISR tasking process to mirror the CAS request process, synchronizing collection with ground operations, and codifying these changes in joint doctrine.

By revamping its ISR approach to COIN, the CFACC will increase the value of the intelligence it provides ground commanders and will play a valuable role in assisting supported JTF, land, and SOF components as they seek to gain security in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, developing a successful CFACC ISR methodology for COIN will not only benefit the current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, but will serve the joint force well as it deals with the range of military operations in the long war and beyond.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Lt Gen Thomas F. Metz, et al., "OIF II: Intelligence Leads Successful Counterinsurgency Operations," *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* 31, no. 3 (July-September 2005), 10, <http://www.proquest.umi.com/> (accessed 26 February 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>3</sup> Laura Geldhof, et al., "Intelligent Design," *Special Warfare* 19, no. 3 (May-June 2006), 25, <http://www.proquest.umi.com/> (accessed 26 February 2007).

<sup>4</sup> The CFACC in the USCENTCOM AOR plans and conducts operations at the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) on Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. The CAOC at Al Udeid simultaneously supports Operations IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), and JTF Horn of Africa.

<sup>5</sup> Colonel Teresa Fitzpatrick, "Centralized Control, Decentralized Execution of Airborne ISR," PowerPoint, 1 June 2006, Langley AFB, VA: 480<sup>th</sup> Intelligence Wing.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Air Force, Operational Employment--Air and Space Operations Center, Draft Air Force Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (AFTTP) 3-3.60 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Headquarters Air Force Doctrine Center, September 2006), 1-2. "The AOC is the operational-level command and control (C2) center that provides the JFACC with the capability to direct and supervise the activities of assigned and attached forces and to monitor the actions of both enemy and friendly forces. . . . In a joint or combined environment, the AOC will be designated either as a joint air operations center (JAOC) or a combined air operations center (CAOC) and manned accordingly."

<sup>7</sup> The information in this section regarding the AOC is based on the author's multiple years of service in AOCs in the Pacific, Europe, and Middle East. The author has served in a variety of AOC positions in the Strategy, Combat Plans, and ISR divisions as well as the Special Operations Liaison Element.

<sup>8</sup> Metz, et al., 10.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Air Force, Operational Employment--Air and Space Operations Center, Draft Air Force Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (AFTTP) 3-3.60 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Headquarters Air Force Doctrine Center, September 2006), 1.4-1.5.

<sup>10</sup> The author interviewed multiple JTF, Army, and Special Operations personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan during trips to war zones there in 2004 and 2005. The interviews were conducted with intelligence collection managers and analysts assigned to tactical and operational-level units in order to determine at what stage in the collection tasking process requirements were being generated.

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<sup>11</sup> Eliot Cohen, et al., “Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review* 86, no. 2 (March-April 2006), 52, <http://www.proquest.umi.com/> (accessed 26 February 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Metz, et al., 10.

<sup>13</sup> Cohen, et al., 49.

<sup>14</sup> Colonel Kirk Mardis (Collection Management Chief for Multi-National Force Iraq, Baghdad, Iraq, July 2005-July 2006), in discussion with the author, December 2005. A collection manager can be located at every level from Tactical through Strategic. The collection manager is responsible for determining what intelligence problems commanders want answered and then matching the appropriate collection asset, be it HUMINT, SIGINT, IMINT, and so forth, to collect against that requirement.

<sup>15</sup> Metz, et al., 12. Cohen, et al., 52.

<sup>16</sup> A collection deck is a list of ISR targets compiled by the collection manager.

<sup>17</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Justin Mahoney (USCENTCOM Combined Air Operations Center Collection Manager, Al Udeid AB, Qatar, September 06–January 07), interview by the author, 17 April 2007. Based on his experience as the collection manager at the CAOC in Al Udeid that simultaneously supports operations in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), and JTF Horn of Africa, Lt Mahoney estimated that approximately 80-85 percent of collection requests in OIF were generated from the battalion/brigade level and that nearly 100 percent of collection requests in OEF were generated from this same level.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ahmed Hashim (3<sup>d</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment, Tal Afar, Iraq), interview by the author, 16 April, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Metz, et al., 13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>22</sup> Geldhof, et al., 25.

<sup>23</sup> Metz, et al., 11.

<sup>24</sup> Vice Adm Lowell E. Jacoby, “Intelligence Collection, Handling and Analysis Undergo Fundamental Change” (lecture, Joint Warfare Conference, Arlington, VA, 25-26 October 2006).

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<sup>25</sup> Colonel James M. Waring, et al., “The 19<sup>th</sup> BCD in Counterinsurgency Operations,” *Field Artillery Magazine* (July-August 2005), 17.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Wall, “Finding the Needle: Pentagon, Intelligence Agency Expands Fleet of Unmanned Aircraft,” *Aviation Week and Space Technology* 159, no. 25 (22 December 2003), 28, <http://www.proquest.umi.com/> (accessed 26 February 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Mahoney interview. CAOC procedures still require units to submit their imagery requirements 48 hours prior to the kick-off of the ATO. However, for Full Motion Video assets such as the Predator, ground units can change their requirements up to 12 hours prior to ATO execution provided the change in tasking won’t affect aircrew or aircraft timing or the overall route of the mission.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Colonel Kirk Mardis, telephone call with author, 12 April 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Vice Adm Lowell E. Jacoby, “Intelligence Collection, Handling and Analysis Undergo Fundamental Change” (lecture, Joint Warfare Conference, Arlington, VA, 25-26 October 2006).

<sup>31</sup> The information in this section regarding persistence and the AOC’s approach to this requirement is based on the author’s multiple years of service in AOCs in the Pacific, Europe, and Middle East. The author has served in a variety of AOC positions in the Strategy, Combat Plans, and ISR divisions as well as the Special Operations Liaison Element and has been present in dozens of daily update briefs to the CAOC Director where the daily ISR game plan is briefed.

<sup>32</sup> Units can submit an adhoc request to via the JTF to the CAOC for time-sensitive, unplanned collection requirements. While the CAOC will accept some of these requests, it is hesitant to do so very often unless the priority is extremely high. Tasking an airborne ISR asset with an adhoc requirement generally means that it will not be able to collect all of the taskings it was assigned prior to take-off. Therefore, the CAOC must weigh which is more valuable, the adhoc or pre-planned tasking. Ultimately, the CAOC wants to dissuade units from overusing the adhoc tasking method.

<sup>33</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Command and Control for Joint Air Operations, Joint Publication (JP) 3-56.1 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 14 November 1994), 48.

<sup>34</sup> Amy Ryder, e-mail message to the author, 12 April 2007. Mrs. Ryder is a consultant working on the development of Combined Air Operations Center Tactics, Techniques, and Procedure training and documentation.

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